

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Opera that *moves*

English Touring Opera Launch Autumn 2019 Season

English Touring Opera are producing a **singspiel season** this Autumn, pairing Mozart's *The Seraglio* with Kurt Weill's *The Silver Lake – A Winter's Tale* (Der Silbersee).

- Season opens at Hackney Empire on 4 - 8 October and tours until 16 November
- *The Seraglio*: period production of Mozart's first commercial success
- *The Silver Lake*: first UK production in over 20 years of the Weill-Kaiser collaboration banned by the Nazis. Featuring five community choirs across the UK, including Streetwise Opera.
- Local singers perform as part of the chorus throughout the tour

The singspiel form enabled Mozart and Weill to make nuanced and powerful social commentary, thanks to its populist appeal and equal weighting of drama and music. In extraordinary political times, ETO hope that the accessible form will engage our audiences and that the messages of the operas might tell us something about life in contemporary Britain.

Preview images: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/dvVWbFc6XyHQNuCW7>. Contact Martin Weston, Marketing Officer for interviews, press tickets, or to request more information martin.weston@englishtouringopera.org.uk | 020 7833 2555.

The Seraglio

The beauty of Mozart's *The Seraglio* makes it one of the greatest examples of singspiel. Though written during a time when attitudes to the East and to Islam were strongly ambivalent, Mozart's instinctive understanding of human nature elevates the story onto a higher plane; in his hands it becomes an exposition of the need for tolerance and understanding between different cultures and a celebration of the power of both mind and heart to control and conquer the passions of lust and revenge.

The opera premiered in 1782 at the Vienna Burgtheater, marked Mozart's first real success in the theatre and provided the young composer with much needed commercial breakthrough. Mozart transformed the singspiel model to create a form of opera that, whilst retaining its popular appeal, incorporated all forms of contemporary composition to examine all of society, for all of society. Through Weill's teacher Busoni, Mozart's singspiels became a model for Kurt Weill's work in the 20th century.

Stephen Medcalf returns to direct for ETO for his first production since his time as the company's Director of Productions (1991-1997). He will collaborate with conductor John Andrews, whose recent credits include ETO's acclaimed production of Rossini's *Elizabeth I* (2019) and a celebrated recording of Sir Arthur Sullivan's incidental music with the BBC Concert Orchestra and Singers. Principles include Lucy Hall (Konstanze), John-Colyn Gyeantey (Belmonte), Nazan Fikret (Blonde), Richard Pinkstone (Pedrillo), Matthew Stiff (Osmin) and Alex Andreou (Pasha). Production design is by Adam Wiltshire and lighting by David W Kidd.

Sung in English with English surtitles.

The Silver Lake

Weill's poetic and uplifting *The Silver Lake* is considered by many to be his masterpiece. It features some of his finest arias, complemented by some of the most unusual and moving choruses written by any composer in the twentieth century.

It was written in the early 1930s, during economic collapse and the rise of the far-right, and unquestionably satirises the social situation in Germany at the time. Olim, who shoots a starving man during a robbery, then tries to make amends by keeping him in luxury, represents the confused middle-class social democrats of the Weimar Republic. Severin, the injured man who is obsessed with revenge for past wrongs, represents the bitter working class people. And Frau von Luber, who defrauds Olim of his castle by building up his fear of Severin, represents the militaristic aristocracy making a comeback, presumably how Weill and Kaiser saw the Nazis.

The opera was first produced in Leipzig in February 1933, but quickly branded *Entartete Musik* by the Nazi party and closed and banned shortly afterwards. Weill and his collaborator and librettist Georg Kaiser were forced to flee Germany.

Weill's collaboration with Kaiser allowed the composer to throw off the shackles of a restrictive relationship with Bertolt Brecht. After adventures in South America, then destitution and imprisonment in Germany as a young man, Kaiser achieved huge success as a playwright in the 1920s and 30s. His work was at the forefront of the expressionist movement and he was one of the most produced playwrights in the country.

This will be the first production of *The Silver Lake* in the UK for 20 years. It is directed by ETO Artistic Director James Conway and conducted by James Holmes, an authority on the composer's work. Principles include Ronald Samm (Olim), David Webb (Severin), Luci Briginshaw (Fennimore), Sarah Pring (Frau Luber). Production design is by Adam Wiltshire and lighting by David W Kidd.

Sung in German, narrated in English, with English surtitles.

Community Choirs

We are delighted to be collaborating with local performers across the UK, who will appear as the chorus in *The Silver Lake*. This includes performers from Streetwise Opera (London, Buxton and Durham) and local community choirs.

Laika the Spacedog

In a time when British space travel and the achievements of British astronaut Tim Peake are inspiring school children, *Laika, the Spacedog* flies again this Autumn, touring across the UK to schools and libraries. Written for children aged 7-11 (Key Stage 2) and families, this multi award-winning children's opera incorporates many areas of the curriculum, including science, history and literacy as well as music. The music is by Russell Hepplewhite, words and direction by Tim Yealland, design by Jude Munden, and animation by Babis Alexiadis.

Continuing the success of *Paradise Planet*, our climate change opera, ETO are using opera to explore some of the issues which will most effect our children's futures.

Touring to Holy Trinity and St. Silas Primary School (9th Oct), Thameside Theatre (two performances on 15th Oct), Roose Community Primary School (7th Nov), St James C Of E Junior School (8th Nov).

Tour Dates

Hackney Empire, London

Friday 4 October: *The Seraglio*
Sat 5 October: *The Silver Lake*
Mon 7 October: *The Silver Lake*
Tue 8 October: *The Seraglio*

Buxton Opera House

Fri 11 October: *The Seraglio*
Sat 12 October: *The Silver Lake*

Gala Theatre, Durham

Fri 18 October: *The Seraglio*
Sat 19 October: *The Silver Lake*

Theatre Royal Bath

Mon 21 October: *The Seraglio*
Tue 22 October: *The Silver Lake*

Snape Maltings Concert Hall

Fri 25 October: *The Seraglio*
Sat 26 October: *The Silver Lake*

Saffron Hall, Saffron Walden

Fri 1 November: *The Silver Lake*
Sat 2 November: *The Seraglio*

Great Hall, Lancaster University

Thu 7 November: *The Silver Lake* (concert performance)

Exeter Northcott

Tue 12 November: *The Seraglio*
Thu 14 November: *The Silver Lake*
Fri 15 November: *The Silver Lake*
Sat 16 November: *The Seraglio*

Preview images: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/dvWbFc6XyHQNucW7>

Notes to Editors

Since 1979, English Touring Opera (ETO) have toured outstanding live productions, with a commitment to rediscovering and reimagining work, and impactful outreach projects to more towns and cities than any other UK opera company. We reach over 50,000 people per year with five mainstage productions, two specially commissioned operas for children and young people with special educational needs, a series of creative workshops for people with dementia and their carers, and more than 70 workshops for people of all abilities and ages.

In challenging the geographical barriers that many face to accessing live opera, ETO serve many areas of the country with severely limited access to other live performance. In 2018, ETO brought opera to the heart of 31 communities through 162 performances, across the UK from Truro in Cornwall to Perth in Scotland. Our work was recognised in 2014 with the **Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera**.

www.englishtouringopera.org.uk